



U.S. Department of Justice

Craig S. Morford
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Michigan

*Suite 2001
211 West Fort Street
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277
Fax: (313) 226-3561*

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Shannon Bass (313) 226-9530

March 1, 2005

Event: Indictment

Defendant: Matt Mihsen, 47, of Dallas, Texas

MAN CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTING TO SMUGGLE

CASH AND EXPORT PROHIBITED ITEMS TO SYRIA

MATT MIHSEN, age 47, of Dallas, Texas was indicted on March 1, 2005 and charged in three counts: **Count 1**, attempting to export money and goods from the United States to Syria without the authority, permit or license from the Secretary of State required by Executive Order 13338 (50 U.S.C. § 1701); **Count 2**, attempting to smuggle over \$10,000 in United States currency from the United States to Syria (31 U.S.C. § 5332); and **Count 3**, making false statements to federal agents (18 U.S.C. § 1001). Mihsen will be arraigned on the charges on March 8, 2005.

According to the indictment, Mihsen was born in Syria, and he became a naturalized United States citizen in 1991. Mihsen is a licensed private investigator, a licensed pilot, and he has a license to drive commercial vehicles.

The indictment alleges that on the morning of February 15, 2005, Mihsen left Dallas, Texas on Northwest Flight 704 to Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW); his ultimate destination was Damascus, Syria. Mihsen checked his luggage in Dallas, planning to retrieve it in Syria upon his arrival on February 16, 2005. An outbound inspection of Mihsen's luggage at Detroit Metropolitan Airport revealed that he was attempting to export certain items to Syria, including:

- a. one hand held Taser stun device;
- b. two boxes of Black Talon 9 mm ammunition containing 40 rounds;
- c. one Bushnell .22 rifle scope;
- d. oleoresin capsicum pepper spray ("Mace");
- e. one Diamond Tech Pro diamond tester;
- f. one bullet-proof vest; and
- g. three Geiger counters.

Exportation to Syria of any product of the United States except food and medicine, without first obtaining a license or permit issued by the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Commerce, violates Executive Order 13338 signed by President George W. Bush on May 11, 2004, in response to "the actions of the Government of Syria, in supporting terrorism, continuing its occupation of Lebanon, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, and undermining United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, [which] constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States."

In addition to the listed items, the indictment alleges that Mihsen knowingly concealed \$13,256 in United States currency on his person and in an article of luggage, and attempted to transport it from the United States to Damascus, Syria. Mihsen denied having more than \$10,000 in currency with him when he was questioned by federal agents, and he failed to declare the currency in a Report of International Transportation of Currency or Monetary Instruments Form 4790, as required by federal law.

In announcing the indictment, United States Attorney Craig S. Morford commended the work of the Special Agents of the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection, who conducted the investigation. The prosecution is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Cynthia Oberg.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.